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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001346

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. NEULING
STATE PASS USAID FOR M. COPSON
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE
TREASURY FOR J. RALYEAE AND B. CUSHMAN
USDOC FOR ROBERT TELCHIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/28/2015

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: ISOLATED LAND SEIZURES BUT MIXED SIGNALS ON
"FASTER TRACK" LAND REFORM

REF: HARARE 01156

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHRISTOPHER DELL UNDER SECTION 1.4 B/D

¶11. (C) Summary: Incendiary comments about "Faster Track" land reform by GOZ Ministers may have spurred some recent isolated, but violent farm seizures, but it is unclear whether they signal a new series of farm invasions. Nevertheless, pressure on commercial farmers to give up their farms is incessant. The Security and Justice Ministers, rabble rousing remarks about clearing out white farmers and conducting a mopping up exercise, plus passage of the constitutional amendment depriving displaced farmers of all legal recourse, could be perceived by greedy ZANU-PF stalwarts as a green light for a land grab. End Summary.

GOZ Rabble Rousing on Farm Takovers

¶12. (U) Addressing a land audit meeting in Masvingo province earlier in September, Minister for State Security Land, Land Reform and Resettlement Didymus Mutasa reportedly said the remaining white commercial farmers must be "cleared out" under a new land re-settlement operation he dubbed "Faster Track." According to press reports, Mutasa described white commercial farmers as "dirt" which needed to be cleansed. On September 23, announcing that the GOZ had directed the Registrar of Deeds to immediately nullify all title deeds for the 4000 farms nationalized by the Constitutional Amendment Act (reftel), Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Patrick Chinamasa told the press "there will be a mopping up exercise with those farms who escaped the net being accounted for and gazetted for acquisition." Chinamasa added that farms protected under bilateral trade agreements would be acquired, but full compensation would be paid.

¶13. (SBU) During the week of September 18, several farm invasions occurred in Manicaland province. In Chipinge, the area with the highest number of remaining white-owned commercial farms in Zimbabwe, a senior CIO official, accompanied by local police, led an invading gang that attacked and drove off one farm manager, leaving him with a dozen stitches to the head, according to Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) President Doug Taylor-Freeme. Meeting with Embassy econoffs on September 27, Taylor-Freeme commented that the invaded farms had had a history of confrontation with government officials. Informed of the attacks, Mutasa backtracked on his threat and professed ignorance about the farm seizures, according to the press.

¶14. (SBU) Taylor-Freeme said a further 10 commercial farmers in Manicaland had recently received letters signed by the local district administrator ordering them to stop farming immediately. He also related that on the previous weekend, Mutasa, Chinamasa and Agriculture Minister Made had met in Rusape, Manicaland with a group of commercial farmers. The Ministers told them they would have to reduce their number of farms from 40 down to 15. No further details are available at this time. According to Taylor-Freeme, there are still well over 500 white commercial farmers operating in Zimbabwe, down from 4500 in 2000. They have all received section 7 notices of imminent physical takeover of their farms. Some have made "arrangements" at the local level to continue operations; others had, until passage of the constitutional amendment, pursued legal redress.

Comment

¶15. (C) It is unclear at this point whether the latest round of farm seizures reflects new GOZ policy and the start of a new concerted wave of GOZ-sanctioned takeovers, or if this is a series of isolated events. Local politicians and ZANU-PF cadres at the provincial level appear to be interpreting the Security and Justice Ministers' incendiary remarks according to their own personal ends and ambitions. Furthermore, the constitutional amendment depriving displaced farmers of all legal recourse no doubt presents a "green

light" to ambitious and greedy Party stalwarts eager to obtain free land at the expense of the remaining white commercial farms. What is clear is that the Ministers' appearance before the Rusape farmers, and their call to shut down more commercial farms signal no let up to the pressure on white farmers to pack their bags.

16. (C) Whether these incidents are isolated, violent land grabs, or generally reflect a renewed GOZ focus on driving out the remaining white commercial farmers, they will only further feed the international perception of Zimbabwe as a basket case and inappropriate destination for investment. The GOZ's ability to shoot itself in the foot, when it is already limping, seems endless. As the country approaches yet another food shortage, the decision to attack the few remaining productive farms is mind boggling. End Comment.
DELL